



Independent observer
of the Global Fund

Global Fund Observer

NEWSLETTER

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1. COMMENTARY: The Right Diagnosis, but the Wrong Prescription

by Josef Decosas

Editor's Note: This article is responding to [a commentary](#) on the firing of John Parsons written by Bernard Rivers in GFO 203.

In his commentary posted on 21 November, Bernard River's joined countless others in cheering the dismissal of the Inspector General of the Global Fund. The cheers are not surprising. The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) has not made many friends. But reducing this to a discussion of the failures of John Parsons is too facile. This is about a much more fundamental issue of what we should expect of an OIG in the Global Fund. And here, I suggest, Bernard is making a big mistake.

In 2008, the incoming Inspector General had options for shaping the OIG in the evolving Global Fund structure. The most visionary among them would have been a unit to monitor grant implementation on behalf of all stakeholders in the Global Fund, from people benefiting from grants to those contributing through their taxes. The OIG had the status in the Global Fund architecture to

do this. It was independent of the Global Fund Secretariat. Like the Technical Review Panel, it was under the direct authority of the Global Fund Board.

If John Parsons had grasped this opportunity, the OIG could have added real value to the Global Fund. It could have cut through the superficiality of numbers that the Global Fund proudly announces as its “results.” It could have analysed and communicated the meaning of these numbers, and the real costs of generating them. These costs are never seen in the Global Fund’s reports because they are borne by communities and by health and social systems that are supposed to be “beneficiaries.” The OIG could have analysed and communicated the risks that resources for the response to HIV, tuberculosis or malaria are lost or misapplied because of inappropriate programme design or weak management controls. And, most importantly, the OIG could have worked with grant recipients and grant administrators to mitigate these risks before they resulted in losses.

This would have been a function usually associated with an internal audit department. In the case of the Global Fund, this would have required a new definition of what is “internal.” A definition had already been advanced by former Executive Director Michel Kazatchkine when he told countless meetings of stakeholders that “the Global Fund is you.” If the Global Fund really is all of us who contribute or benefit, if it is not some office in Geneva or a group of contracted accountants called “local fund agents” (LFAs), then I would like to have something like an OIG to keep an eye on things before they can go wrong.

John Parsons may well have had such a vision when he started the rounds of comprehensive country audits in 2008. But the OIG soon became side-tracked. There are three reasons for what went wrong:

1. Although the country audits were meant to be “comprehensive,” the OIG did not hire professional staff to guide them. In 2011, the OIG finally recruited an Audit Director who had a notion of what was required. But by then the damage was already done: Audit reports had been made public that included programmatic and procurement reviews lacking focus and quality control; consultants had been recruited at the last minute on the basis of availability rather than competence; reports had been generated by single consultants working without professional guidance, embedded in teams of finance auditors like journalists embedded in army units in the Iraq war; and public health and supply management findings in the audit reports had been edited down to meaningless paragraphs by audit team leaders with only rudimentary understanding of the issues under discussion.
2. The emerging focus on “recovering funds” poisoned the atmosphere of work with grant recipients. The OIG teams were resented before they even arrived in the country. Their reputation had spread. They were considered to be just another cross to bear by grant recipients who were often run ragged by unreasonable and senseless controls imposed by the Global Fund through the LFA. In such an atmosphere, participatory analysis and the search for solutions to mitigate programmatic and supply management risks became nearly impossible.
3. Fraud investigation became a major growth department within the OIG. The investigation unit was staffed by consultants who sometimes overstepped the limits of acceptable

behaviour. There was never an attempt to clearly communicate the difference between the practices of the investigators seeking retribution, and the problem-solving approach of internal auditors. In fact, some of the OIG auditors and their consultants did not understand this difference.

By the time the new Director of Audits started to address some of these issues, the relationship of the OIG with the Global Fund Secretariat – and with many of the constituencies at country level – was irrevocably poisoned. The Secretariat had long ago started to create an evaluation unit within its own hierarchy, short-circuiting any attempt to locate the evaluation function under direct Board authority. And, as Bernard rightly points out, an unknown number of grant recipients had suffered serious damage because of the inappropriate zeal to “recover funds” by contracted OIG financial auditors.

The damage is done and the Global Fund needs a new OIG, not just a new Inspector General. I agree with Bernard up to this point. His diagnosis is correct but his prescription is wrong. His suggestion that the OIG should concentrate on finding more fraud is prescribing the poison that caused the disease in the first place.

We don't need to be afraid that the fraud investigation unit of the Global Fund will disappear. But what is likely to disappear is an opportunity for a transparent evaluation and audit function to monitor the practices of grant funding and grant implementation. Clearly, John Parsons did not realise this opportunity although I think he may have tried. The opportunity may now be lost forever. If this is the case, it is nothing to cheer about. The Global Fund may have rid itself of an annoying itch, only to move one step further away from the partnership approach to development financing that it pretends to practice.

Josef Decosas ([email](#)) is a founding member of the HERA Foundation, an independent non-profit association founded by members of HERA, an international consulting firm committed to promoting the right to health (www.hera.eu).

Conflict of interest statement: Josef Decosas served on the Technical Review Panel of the Global Fund from 2005 to 2010, and has worked as a public health consultant on several country missions for the OIG since 2009.

[This article was first posted on GFO Live on 5 December 2012.]

Another reader has posted a comment on GFO Live about the original commentary by Bernard Rivers. See [here](#) (scroll down to the bottom of the commentary).

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2. NEWS: Interim Inspector General Appointed

The Global Fund has appointed Norbert Hauser as Interim Inspector General, effective immediately.

Norbert Hauser is a lawyer and international auditor who recently retired after a 35-year career in government and financial supervision. He has extensive experience supervising financial and legal matters, having served until 2011 as Vice-President of Germany's Supreme Audit Institution. Mr Hauser also served as a member of the High-Level Panel that reviewed the Global Fund's governance, grant management and financial management arrangements in 2011.

In a [news release](#) announcing the appointment, the Global Fund said that Mr Hauser's "reputation for independence, integrity and honesty is unsurpassed."

Mr Hauser's career in public service includes experience as a lawyer, an auditor, a mayor, a Member of Germany's Parliament, and as a chairman of international bodies and task forces and parliamentary and council committees. In addition, he has served in numerous supervisory roles, such as external auditor of the International Atomic Energy Agency and as Chairman of the Panel of External Auditors of the United Nations.

"We could not wish for a better person than Norbert Hauser to fill this interim role," said Simon Bland, Chair of the Global Fund Board. "We are delighted that he is able to provide this support to the Global Fund at the current time."

Mr Hauser has agreed to serve as interim Inspector General for a period of up to nine months while the Global Fund Board conducts a thorough search for its new Inspector General. The Global Fund said that Mr Hauser will not be a candidate for the permanent position.

As per established policy, Mr Hauser will report to the Board through its Audit and Ethics Committee during the term of his interim appointment.

[This article was first posted on GFO Live on 5 December 2012.]

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3. NEWS: Global Fund Results Continue Upward Trend

The key results numbers for programmes supported by the Global Fund continue to rise at a fast clip. On 30 November, the Global Fund [announced](#) 2012 year-end estimates for the outcome and output numbers it tracks.

The number of people receiving antiretrovirals (ARVs) is estimated at 4.2 million, an increase of 27% over the 3.3 million estimated for 2011. The year-over-year increase from 2011 to 2012 for some of the other numbers is even greater: 35% for the number of insecticide-treated nets (ITNs) distributed for malaria; 46% for the number of HIV care and support services provided; and 88% for the number of HIV behavioural change communications. See the table below for details.

Table: Cumulative results for programmes supported by the Global Fund to end 2012, showing comparison with end 2011

| Category | Results to December 2012 | Results to December 2011 | Year to year change |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| No. of people receiving ARVs | 4.2 million | 3.3 million | + 27% |
| TB smear-positive cases detected and treated | 9.7 million | 8.6 million | + 12% |
| No. of condoms distributed | 4.2 billion | 3.5 billion | + 20% |
| No. of HIV counselling and testing sessions | 250 million | 190 million | + 32% |
| No. of malaria ITNs distributed | 310 million | 230 million | + 35% |
| HIV behavioural change communications | 300 million | 160 million | + 88% |
| No. of women receiving PMTCT treatment | 1.7 million | 1.3 million | + 30% |
| Services to most-at-risk populations | 30 million | 23 million | + 30% |
| HIV care and support services provided | 19 million | 13 million | +46% |

The announcement from the Global Fund did not include an estimate of lives saved through Fund-supported programmes. In July, the Fund estimated that the programmes it supports had saved 8.7 million lives through the end of June 2012 (see [GFO article](#)).

The results numbers have been rising steadily and rapidly for several years. Given that fewer new grants have been awarded in the last couple of years (compared to previous years), one might expect that the large increases in the year-over-year results would start to diminish. That they have not yet started to go down is probably due to the fact that there are a large number of active grants, many of which have only recently entered their second phases.

[This article was first posted on GFO Live on 30 November 2012.]

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4. NEWS: Forecast of Uncommitted Assets Adjusted

*Assets as of December 2014 expected to be
\$102 million lower than previously forecast*

The Global Fund has made some changes to its forecast of uncommitted assets. In a report to the Global Fund Board for its November 2012 meeting, the Finance and Operational Performance Committee (FOPC) said that it forecasts that uncommitted assets as of December 2014 will be \$1,326 million, down \$102 million from the \$1,428 million forecast prepared in September 2012. (See [GFO article](#) on the September forecast.)

“Uncommitted assets” means assets that are not already committed to approved proposals and grant renewals, and other Board funding decisions, and that could be applied to new funding opportunities or to any new funding commitments that the Board decides to make (such as extending expiring grants).

Although the forecast of uncommitted assets as of December 2014 is lower, the FOPC forecasted that uncommitted assets as of December 2012 and as of December 2013 will actually be higher than previously forecast. The table below provides details and also lists the factors that caused the changes in the forecast.

Table: Forecast of uncommitted assets, 2012–2014 end periods

| Description | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | \$ million | | |
| September 2012 forecast | 2,035 | 1,390 | 1,428 |
| Changes in timing of grant commitments | 565 | (188) | (361) |
| Changes in amount of commitments for grants and operating expenses, including foreign exchange impact | 42 | (58) | (31) |
| Changes in donor contributions, including foreign exchange impact | (33) | (82) | 43 |
| November 2012 forecast | 2,609 | 1,556 | 1,326 |
| Net change (November vs. September forecasts) | 574 | 246 | (102) |

Source: *Forecast of Assets: Calendar years 2012 (F4) and Q1, 2013 – Q2, 2015, Board Document GF/B28/03.*

Note: The numbers shown for the September and November forecasts do not include the \$500 million reserve provision for unanticipated risks.

The main reason for the change in the forecast for 2012 is a shift in grant commitments from 2012 to 2013, which the FOPC said was due to principal recipient absorption constraints and prolonged grant negotiations. The latter will result in delays in signing agreements for grant renewals and new grants emanating from proposals approved under the Transitional Funding Mechanism.

The FOPC said that it plans to prepare four in-depth forecasts each year.

The November 2012 forecast is available at www.theglobalfund.org/en/board/meetings/twentyeighth/documents. See Document GF/B28/03.

[This article was first posted on GFO Live on 6 December 2012.]

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5. NEWS: Civil Society PRs Raise Concerns Related to Grant Implementation

Recommendations to Global Fund drafted

Principal recipients from civil society have expressed concern that despite the Global Fund’s explicit policy on Indirect Cost Recovery (ICR), PRs continue to experience significant challenges. During

its annual meeting in Cape Town from 8–12 November, the Civil Society Principal Recipients Network (CSPRN) said that these challenges are due to a lack of understanding among local fund agents (LFAs) and fund portfolio managers (FPMs) of the concept of ICR and the application of the policy.

The ICR policy, adopted in April 2011, covers percentage-based headquarters overhead charges for international NGOs serving as principal recipients (PRs) and sub-recipients (SRs). (See [GFO article](#) on this topic.)

The CSPRN is a network of 46 non-government PRs of Global Fund grants. It was formed in November 2008 to provide a forum for PRs to share best practices and lessons learned from implementing Global Fund grants. Thirty-eight members attended the Cape Town meeting.

The network drafted various recommendations which it presented on an interim basis to the Global Fund officials at the meeting. The final version of the recommendations is being worked on with no date given for their completion. This article is based on the draft recommendations.

Regarding the ICR policy, the network said that according to the LFA Manual, LFAs are not supposed to require PRs to provide detailed breakdowns of ICR, but they continue to do so.

In addition, the network said, national NGOs should not have been left out of the ICR policy.

The network also expressed concern about the Global Fund's Community Systems Strengthening (CSS) Framework. It said that it appreciates the Global Fund's initiative to develop the framework, but that it has not led to an increase in CSS activities in proposals to the Fund. CSS, the network noted, is a long-term, continuous process, yet proposals often focus on short-term activities that can be quantified and reported. This design approach undermines the CSS, the network said.

The CSPRN said that the review of the PRs' progress reports carried out by LFAs on behalf of the Global Fund is not effective because the LFAs do not have a sufficient understanding of programme activities, technical disease issues, target populations and country context. This is exacerbated by the high turnover of staff within LFAs, with new employees continually having to learn these issues.

The network recommended that PRs be consulted when the performance of LFAs is reviewed. Further, the network recommended that the Global Fund ensure an effective orientation process for LFA staff to enable them get good understanding of grant implementation. The network said that PRs, CCM and other key stakeholders should be part of this process. It also said that those selected for LFA role should have a good understanding of public health and should have programme experience.

The network complained that PRs continue to receive requests from LFA and OIG auditors for copies of internal audit reports. This, the network said, is counter to the principles of the internal audit function and in violation of some national internal audit guidelines. The network recommended that the Global Fund acknowledge that PR internal audit reports are confidential internal documents meant for senior leadership only. The network recommended that the Fund accept reports based on the findings of an internal audit without asking for the internal audit report itself.

The network also expressed concern that civil society PRs are sometimes dependent on the performance of the government PRs. If the governments PRs do not deliver, this affects the civil society PRs' implementation and ultimately their rating and disbursements.

The network recommended the following in this regard:

- In the new funding model, CCMs should ensure that dual-track financing is used.
- Civil society PRs should not be made responsible for government functions.
- CCMs should establish a mechanism for cooperation between government and civil society PRs (in addition to what is in the grant agreements).
- Inter-dependent performance targets (i.e., targets involving different PRs) should not be used.
- The Global Fund should have the flexibility and a mechanism to adjust performance targets during the period of grant implementation.

To contact the Civil Society Principal Recipients Network, write to Marieta de Vos (mdevos@nacosa.org.za) or Michael Kachumi (michael.kachumi@chaz.org.zm).

[This article was first posted on GFO Live on 6 December 2012.]

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6. NEWS: New PEPAR Blueprint Outlines Areas of Collaboration with the Global Fund

The US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) has entered a new era of cooperation with the Global Fund, one that institutionalises joint planning and implementation in countries where both organisations are investing.

This is one of the themes of PEPFAR's new action plan released by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in November. The action plan, entitled "PEPFAR Blueprint: Creating an AIDS-Free Generation," provides a strategic road map for saving lives and striving for an AIDS-free generation. The blueprint constitutes PEPFAR's contribution to the fight against AIDS.

One of the many action steps included in the blueprint is to expand collaboration with multilateral and bilateral partners. The blueprint described the Global Fund as "a critical multilateral vehicle for enlisting public and private sector donors" and said that in leading the Global Fund's reform agenda, the US government has "helped the Fund to strengthen its promise as an efficient, long-term channel for funding evidence-based, high-impact interventions."

The blueprint said that PEPFAR will continue to work with the Global fund "in a coordinated, complementary and synergistic manner." For example, the blueprint said, PEPFAR will work with the Global Fund to harmonise monitoring, evaluation, and expenditure analysis and reporting practices.

According to the blueprint, PEPFAR will expand its engagement with the donor community – including the Global Fund, the World Bank and U.S. government agencies – “to better measure and track external and internal funding flows for health, and to support greater transparency and accountability in the deployment of those resources.”

The blueprint said that PEPFAR will strengthen its technical assistance efforts in these areas and will work with the Global Fund to identify areas where additional technical support is required, including programme quality, transition and scale-up of Global Fund–financed services, and use of strategic information to improve planning.

[This article was first posted on GFO Live on 5 December 2012.]

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7. NEWS: Low Success Rates for Multi-Country Grants May Slow Malaria Control

Study blames inadequate guidance from the Global Fund

There has been inadequate support for cross-border malaria control initiatives by the Global Fund, which may slow down gains made in individual countries in sub-Saharan Africa, a new study says.

The [study](#) which was jointly conducted by the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) and Aidsplan, and published in the *Malaria Journal*, found that multi-country initiatives have not been well supported by the Global Fund. According to the study, only 25% of all multi-country proposals have been funded, compared to 45% for single country applications. For malaria multi-country proposals, only five of 16 applications have been funded since the launch of the Global Fund.

The authors blamed inadequate guidance from the Global Fund for the low success rates for multi-country applications.

“We found that guidance for applicants was generally weak and generic, and that there was little recognition that for malaria specifically, cross border implementation of control strategies are necessary,” co-author Dr Roly Gosling said. Dr Gosling leads the Malaria Elimination Initiative Group at the UCSF.

Although most malaria control applications come from single countries, the Global Fund allows joint proposals if they can show clear strategies for controlling diseases with high risk of spread.

The authors found that applications focusing on promoting networking among organisations were more likely to be funded than those implementing disease control measures (such as cross-border malaria control initiatives).

Even though the Global Fund has said that multi-country or regional grants will be included in the new funding model, the authors expressed fears that multi-country proposals may be squeezed out in an era of limited resources.

Dr David McCoy, another co-author, pointed out that because of insecurity and migration, border areas generally have weaker health systems, which further compounds the problem of cross-border malaria control.

“For such areas, it could be useful for the Global Fund to pro-actively facilitate the funding and development of a multi-country, cross-border approach to malaria control,” he said, adding that the Global Fund has to respond to country-led plans and be proactive in allocating resources to areas of need if those country plans ignore these regional issues.

[This article was first posted on GFO Live on 5 December 2012.]

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8. ANNOUNCEMENT: Report on Global Commitments to AIDS Includes Information on the Global Fund

A [report](#) on global commitments to AIDS has been released by ONE, a grassroots advocacy and organisation that fights extreme poverty and preventable disease, particularly in Africa. Bono was one of the co-founders of ONE.

The report, entitled “The Beginning of the End? Tracking Global Commitments on AIDS,” includes information on bilateral and multilateral commitments for AIDS for each of major donors countries (one of the “countries” is the European Union). The report also provides information on these countries’ commitments to the Global Fund. For each country, the report contains a chart comparing pledges and contributions to the Fund for the period 2002–2013.

The report also contains a table showing all donor contributions to the Global Fund for the period 2009–2011.

Note: Aidsplan plans to release an update on pledges and contributions to the Global Fund shortly.

[This article was first posted on GFO Live on 5 December 2012.]

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AVAILABLE ON [GFO LIVE](#):

The following articles have been posted on GFO Live on the Aidspan website. Click on the article heading to view the article. These articles may or may not be reproduced in GFO Newsletter.

[NEWS: OIG Releases Report on Diagnostic Review for Georgia Grants](#)

The diagnostic review says that Georgia has made major achievements with Global Fund money such as attaining universal access to antiretroviral therapy and nearly eliminating malaria.

[NEWS: Too Many CCMs Remain Weak, but Progress is Possible, Report Says](#)

Despite the challenges of developing strong country coordinating mechanisms and creating effective civil society engagement, resources and focused advocacy can make a difference, according to a report issued earlier this year by the International Treatment Preparedness Coalition and the International Council of AIDS Service Organizations.

[NEWS: Evidence of Successful National Responses for All Three Diseases in China, OIG Report Says](#)

A diagnostic review conducted by the OIG found many good practices in Global Fund grants to China, as well as some risks. The grants to China will be phased out by the end of 2013.

[NEWS: Audit of Grants to Namibia Identifies Good Practices and Some Weaknesses in Implementation](#)

In its audit of Global Fund grants to Namibia, the Office of the Inspector General observed solid achievements in all three disease programmes, as well as some weaknesses in programme, financial and procurement management.

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This is an issue of the GLOBAL FUND OBSERVER (GFO) Newsletter.

We welcome suggestions for topics we could cover in GFO. If you have a suggestion, please send it to the Editor of GFO (see contact information below).

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GFO is an independent source of news, analysis and commentary about the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (www.theglobalfund.org). GFO is emailed to nearly 10,000 subscribers in 170 countries at least twelve times per year.

GFO is a free service of Aidspan (www.aidspan.org), a Kenya-based international NGO that serves as an independent watchdog of the Global Fund, and that provides services that can benefit all countries wishing to

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